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OFFICE OF PETITIONS

In re Application of
Walker, et al.
Application No. 10/784,845
Filed: 23 February, 2004
Attorney Docket No. 03-011

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ON PETITION

This is a decision on the petition filed on 23 February, 2004, under 37 C.F.R. §1.47(a).

The Office regrets the delay in addressing this matter, however, the petition was provided to the attorneys in the Office of Petitions only at this writing. **Nonetheless, Petitioner is reminded that it is Petitioner's responsibility to be attentive to outstanding matters, and the docketing of Status Inquiries at three- or four-month intervals may well prevent delays such as this.**

For the reasons set forth below, the petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.47(a) is **DISMISSED**.

NOTES:

- (1) Any reply must include a renewed petition (and fee) must include a petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.47 and must be submitted within two (2) months from the mail date of this decision. Extensions of time under 37 C.F.R. §1.136(a) are permitted. The reconsideration request should include a cover letter entitled "Petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.47";
- (2) Thereafter, there will be no further reconsideration of this matter.

BACKGROUND

The record indicates:

- the instant application was filed on 23 February, 2004, without, *inter alia*, a fully executed oath/declaration;
- and the Office did not mail a Notice of Missing Parts indicating, *inter alia*, that a fully executed oath/declaration (signed and dated) was required;
- the lack of a mailing is attributable to the fact that contemporaneously with the filing of the application on 23 February, 2004, Petitioner Steven M. Santisi (Reg. No. 40,157) filed, *inter alia*, the original petition, an oath/declaration signed by Messrs. Walker, Jorasch, Gelman, Tedesco and Santisi for themselves and on behalf of non-signing co-inventor Victor M Garcia (Mr. Garcia), and Petitioner averred that Mr. Garcia had refused to join in the signing of the oath/declaration, however, Petitioner failed to make any showing by Petitioner satisfying the statutory and regulatory requirement that the entire application (description, claims, abstract and drawings) be provided to the non-signing inventor Mr. Garcia, and there is no copy of a transmittal letter evidencing such an event or of the evidence of a diligent effort to ascertain a current/reasonably believed to be last known mailing address, and Petitioner must satisfy these requirements and any others as set forth above and discussed below.

Out of an abundance of caution, Petitioners always are reminded that those registered to practice *and* all others who make representations before the Office are to inquire into the underlying facts of representations made to the Office and support averments with the appropriate documentation—since all owe to the Office the continuing duty to disclose.¹

¹ See supplement of 17 June, 1999. The Patent and Trademark Office is relying on petitioner's duty of candor and good faith and accepting a statement made by Petitioner. See Changes to Patent Practice and Procedure, 62 Fed. Reg. at 53160 and 53178, 1203 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office at 88 and 103 (responses to comments 64 and 109)(applicant obligated under 37 C.F.R. §10.18 to inquire into the underlying facts and circumstances when providing statements to the Patent and Trademark Office).

Specifically, the regulations at 37 C.F.R. §10.18 provide:

§ 10.18 Signature and certificate for correspondence filed in the Patent and Trademark Office.

(a) For all documents filed in the Office in patent, trademark, and other non-patent matters, except for correspondence that is required to be signed by the applicant or party, each piece of correspondence filed by a practitioner in the Patent and Trademark Office must bear a signature by such practitioner complying with the provisions of §1.4(d), §1.4(e), or § 2.193(c)(1) of this chapter.

(b) By presenting to the Office (whether by signing, filing, submitting, or later advocating) any paper, the party presenting such paper, whether a practitioner or non-practitioner, is certifying that—

(1) All statements made therein of the party's own knowledge are true, all statements made therein on information and belief are believed to be true, and all statements made therein are made with the knowledge that whoever, in any matter within the jurisdiction of the Patent and Trademark Office, knowingly and willfully falsifies, conceals, or covers up by any trick, scheme, or device a material fact, or makes any false, fictitious or fraudulent statements or representations, or makes or uses any false writing or document knowing the same to contain any false, fictitious or fraudulent statement or entry, shall be subject to the penalties set forth under 18 U.S.C. 1001, and that violations of this paragraph may jeopardize the validity of the application or document, or the validity or enforceability of any patent, trademark registration, or certificate resulting therefrom; and

(2) To the best of the party's knowledge, information and belief, formed after an inquiry reasonable under the circumstances, that —
 (i) The paper is not being presented for any improper purpose, such as to harass someone or to cause unnecessary delay or needless increase in the cost of prosecution before the Office;

(ii) The claims and other legal contentions therein are warranted by existing law or by a nonfrivolous argument for the extension,

ANALYSIS

The regulations at 37 C.F.R. §1.47 provide in pertinent part:

§ 1.47 Filing when an inventor refuses to sign or cannot be reached.

(a) If a joint inventor refuses to join in an application for patent or cannot be found or reached after diligent effort, the application may be made by the other inventor on behalf of himself or herself and the nonsigning inventor. The oath or declaration in such an application must be accompanied by a petition including proof of the pertinent facts, the fee set forth in § 1.17(h), and the last known address of the nonsigning inventor. The nonsigning inventor may subsequently join in the application by filing an oath or declaration complying with §1.63.

* * *

The regulations at 37 C.F.R. §1.63 provide in pertinent part:

§1.63 Oath or declaration.

(b) In addition to meeting the requirements of paragraph (a) of this section, the oath or declaration must also:

(1) Identify the application to which it is directed;

(2) State that the person making the oath or declaration has reviewed and understands the contents of the application, including the claims, as amended by any amendment specifically referred to in the oath or declaration; and

modification, or reversal of existing law or the establishment of new law;

(iii) The allegations and other factual contentions have evidentiary support or, if specifically so identified, are likely to have evidentiary support after a reasonable opportunity for further investigation or discovery; and

(iv) The denials of factual contentions are warranted on the evidence, or if specifically so identified, are reasonably based on a lack of information or belief.

(c) Violations of paragraph (b)(1) of this section by a practitioner or non-practitioner may jeopardize the validity of the application or document, or the validity or enforceability of any patent, trademark registration, or certificate resulting therefrom. Violations of any of paragraphs (b)(2)(i) through (iv) of this section are, after notice and reasonable opportunity to respond, subject to such sanctions as deemed appropriate by the Commissioner, or the Commissioner's designee, which may include, but are not limited to, any combination of —

(1) Holding certain facts to have been established;

(2) Returning papers;

(3) Precluding a party from filing a paper, or presenting or contesting an issue;

(4) Imposing a monetary sanction;

(5) Requiring a terminal disclaimer for the period of the delay; or

(6) Terminating the proceedings in the Patent and Trademark Office.

(d) Any practitioner violating the provisions of this section may also be subject to disciplinary action. See § 10.23(c)(15).

[Added 50 FR 5175, Feb. 6, 1985, effective Mar. 8, 1985; para. (a) revised, 58 FR 54494, Oct. 22, 1993, effective Nov. 22, 1993; paras. (a) & (b) revised, paras. (c) & (d) added, 62 FR 53131, Oct. 10, 1997, effective Dec. 1, 1997; para. (a) revised, 69 FR 56481, Sept. 21, 2004, effective Oct. 21, 2004]

(3) State that the person making the oath or declaration acknowledges the duty to disclose to the Office all information known to the person to be material to patentability as defined in § 1.56.

When one alleges a refusal of the inventor to sign the application papers, the circumstances of the presentation of the application papers and of the refusal must be specified in a statement of facts by the person who, *inter alia*, presented the inventor with the application papers and/or to whom the refusal was made.

The commentary at MPEP §409.03(d) provides:

409.03(d) Proof of Unavailability or Refusal

INVENTOR CANNOT BE REACHED

Where inability to find or reach a nonsigning inventor "after diligent effort" is the reason for filing under 37 C.F.R. §1.47, a statement of facts should be submitted that fully describes the exact facts which are relied on to establish that a diligent effort was made.

The fact that a nonsigning inventor is on vacation or out of town and is therefore temporarily unavailable to sign the declaration is not an acceptable reason for filing under 37 C.F.R. §1.47.

Furthermore, the fact that an inventor is hospitalized and/or is not conscious is not an acceptable reason for filing under 37 C.F.R. §1.47. 37 C.F.R. §1.43 may be available under these circumstances. See MPEP §409.02. Such a petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.47 will be dismissed as inappropriate.

The statement of facts must be signed, where at all possible, by a person having firsthand knowledge of the facts recited therein. Statements based on hearsay will not normally be accepted. Copies of documentary evidence such as internet searches, certified mail return receipts, cover letters of instructions, telegrams, that support a finding that the nonsigning inventor could not be found or reached should be made part of the statement. The steps taken to locate the whereabouts of the nonsigning inventor should be included statement of facts. It is important that the statement contain facts as opposed to conclusions.

REFUSAL TO JOIN

A refusal by an inventor to sign an oath or declaration when the inventor has not

been presented with the application papers does not itself suggest that the inventor is refusing to join the application unless it is clear that the inventor understands exactly what he or she is being asked to sign and refuses to accept the application papers. A copy of the application papers should be sent to the last known address of the nonsigning inventor, or, if the nonsigning inventor is represented by counsel, to the address of the nonsigning inventor's attorney. The fact that an application may contain proprietary information does not relieve the 37 C.F.R. §1.47 applicant of the responsibility to present the application papers to the inventor if the inventor is willing to receive the papers in order to sign the oath or declaration. It is noted that the inventor may obtain a complete copy of the application, unless the inventor has assigned his or her interest in the application, and the assignee has requested that the inventor not be permitted access. See MPEP §106. It is reasonable to require that the inventor be presented with the application papers before a petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.47 is granted since such a procedure ensures that the inventor is apprised of the application to which the oath or declaration is directed. In re Gray, 115 USPQ 80 (Comm'r Pat. 1956).

Where a refusal of the inventor to sign the application papers is alleged, the circumstances of the presentation of the application papers and of the refusal must be specified in a statement of facts by the person who presented the inventor with the application papers and/or to whom the refusal was made. Statements by a party not present when an oral refusal is made will not be accepted.

Proof that a bona fide attempt was made to present a copy of the application papers (specification, including claims, drawings, and oath or declaration) to the nonsigning inventor for signature, but the inventor refused to accept delivery of the papers or expressly stated that the application papers should not be sent, may be sufficient.

When there is an express oral refusal, that fact along with the time and place of the refusal must be stated in the statement of facts. When there is an express written refusal, a copy of the document evidencing that refusal must be made part of the statement of facts. The document may be redacted to remove material not related to the inventor's reasons for refusal.

When it is concluded by the 37 C.F.R. §1.47 applicant that a nonsigning inventor's conduct constitutes a refusal, all facts upon which that conclusion is based should be stated in the statement of facts in support of the petition or directly in the petition. If there is documentary evidence to support facts alleged in the petition or in any statement of facts, such evidence should be submitted. Whenever a nonsigning inventor gives a reason for refusing to sign the application oath or declaration, that reason should be stated in the petition.

Thus, not only must a copy of the entire application must be sent to the last known address of the non-signing inventor (or the estate representative) with a request that he/she sign the declaration for the patent application—and evidence of that transmittal submitted—but also a reasonable effort must be made to ascertain a current or last known address, and the petition (with fee) must state over the signature and registration number of the Petitioner the last known address and, if appropriate, evidence of the due diligence effort ascertaining same.

Alternatively, an oath or declaration for the patent application in compliance with 37 C.F.R. §§1.63 and 1.64 must be presented.

(The declaration must set forth the inventor's residence, citizenship and post office address. An oath or declaration in compliance with 37 C.F.R. §§1.63 and 1.64 signed by the Rule 1.47 applicant is required.²)

CONCLUSION

The record as it stands is deficient as to document support for the averment of transmittal of the entire application (description, claims, abstract and drawings) to the non-signing inventor at current/valid (or at least reasonably last-known/ascertainable) addresses. The evidence of these requirements (*inter alia*, a copy of the transmittal letter) should be submitted with any renewed petition.

Therefore, the instant petition hereby is **dismissed**.

Further correspondence with respect to this matter should be addressed as follows:³

By mail: Commissioner for Patents⁴
 P.O. Box 1450
 Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

² See: MPEP 409.03(b).

³ On July 15, 2005, the Central Facsimile (FAX) Number will change from (703) 872-9306 to (571) 273-8300. Faxes sent to the old number will be routed to the new number until September 15, 2005. After September 15, 2005, the old number will no longer be in service and (571) 273-8300 will be the only facsimile number recognized for centralized delivery. (For further information. see: <http://www.uspto.gov/web/offices/pac/dapp/opla/preognotice/cfax062005.pdf>.)

⁴ To determine the appropriate addresses for other subject-specific correspondence, refer to the USPTO Web site at www.uspto.gov.

By FAX: IFW Formal Filings
(571) 273-8300
ATTN.: Office of Petitions

By hand: Mail Stop: Petition
Customer Service Window
Randolph Building
401 Dulany Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

While telephone inquiries regarding this decision may be directed to the undersigned at (571) 272-3214, it is noted that all practice before the Office is in writing (see: 37 C.F.R. §1.2¹⁰) and the proper authority for action on any matter in this regard are the statutes (35 U.S.C.), regulations (37 C.F.R.) and the commentary on policy (MPEP). Therefore, no telephone discussion may be controlling or considered authority for Petitioner's action(s).



John J. Gillon, Jr.
Senior Attorney
Office of Petitions

¹⁰ The regulations at 37 C.F.R. §1.2 provide:
§1.2 Business to be transacted in writing.

All business with the Patent and Trademark Office should be transacted in writing. The personal attendance of applicants or their attorneys or agents at the Patent and Trademark Office is unnecessary. The action of the Patent and Trademark Office will be based exclusively on the written record in the Office. No attention will be paid to any alleged oral promise, stipulation, or understanding in relation to which there is disagreement or doubt.